

MODEL SCHOOL CONCEPT & ROLL OUT

Barbados is facing a significant battle against non-communicable diseases (NCDs) with the current data indicating that NCDs are the cause of eight out of every ten deaths. It has become clear to the local and global public health community that the onslaught of NCDs can be inextricably linked to obesity and childhood obesity. Statistics for Barbados indicate that 31% of children are obese or overweight.

As a result of this growing global problem, the WHO has proposed six policy asks designed and tested to lead to a significant reduction in childhood obesity. These include:

- 1. taxation of unhealthy foods and beverages**
- 2. mandatory front of package nutrition labelling**
- 3. enacting legislation related to the Intl code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes**
- 4. banning the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children**
- 5. banning the sale and marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages in schools**
- 6. mandatory physical activity in schools**

CARICOM Heads of Government have since acknowledged the significance of the obesity epidemic and the increasing dangers of NCDs based on scientific evidence and research. During the 2016 and 2018 Heads of Government Summits, the region's leaders in their final communiques committed to the implementation of evidence-based prevention policies that will create healthier food environments for their people. They identified specifically, front of package labelling and a ban on the sale and marketing of sweetened beverages and unhealthy foods in schools.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB) and its Civil Society partners, with the support of the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI), have come together to form the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition, to advocate for the implementation of COP policies and legislation, specifically for the ban on sweetened beverages and unhealthy foods across all schools in Barbados. With the objective of creating healthy school environments for our children, the Coalition has agreed to focus initially on the ban on sweetened drinks, due to the clear evidence of the significant dangers of the

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overconsumption of sugar sweetened beverages and the prevalence of this practice among our children both at school and at home.

Both the Ministries of Education and Health and Wellness have indicated their support for stronger policies but have placed no clear timeline on implementation.

The HSFB, with full support of the Coalition (comprising 10 CSOs and 22 volunteer experts), has moved to initiate a model school template which will allow six forerunner schools to implement COP policies, starting with a ban or restriction on the sale and marketing of sweetened drinks in schools at the start of the September 2019 term.

The aim of the model schools is to:

- 1. Provide a measureable template for policy makers and school administrators as it relates primarily to compliance with new policy and increased stakeholder awareness/support.**
- 2. Persuade policymakers to urgently advance school policy to protect our children.**
- 3. Inspire other schools to adopt the model school concept in the creation of healthier school environments.**

The six model schools were chosen based on their willingness and interest in making their schools healthier environments via the implementation of the proposed policy. Most of these schools were involved in the various Childhood Obesity Prevention education outreaches in 2018 and early 2019.

The selected schools for the programme are Alexandra School; Christ Church Foundation, Queens College; Reynold Weekes Primary, Rock Christian Primary (the only private school) and The St Michael School.

MACRO STRUCTURE

- 1. SCHOOL COORDINATORS IDENTIFIED AND ONBOARDED:** Four Coordinators from among the Coalition's Volunteer Experts have been selected. Their roles will include the following:
 - To support the HSFB team in coordinating and supervising the confirmed activities within the Model School Project
 - To ensure ongoing communication with the principals; specific staff members; vendors and the Coalition members involved in the various activities
 - To work with the research team to ensure that dates and times for any research work is clearly communicated to and agreed by the school administrators.

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The selected Coordinators for the relevant schools are:

Queen's College – **Professor Anne St John, HSFB Lead Policy Champion/Consultant Paediatrician**

Alexandra School – **Stacia Whittaker, Nutritionist, Ministry of Health and Wellness**
Foundation School and Rock Christian Primary – **Shamika Thornhill, Coalition**

Member/Teacher

St Michael School and Reynold Weekes Primary – **Christopher Laurie, Coalition Member/Health Researcher**

TEACHERS SENSITISATION SESSIONS: One Intervention per school required

1. HSFB will facilitate sensitisation sessions with the staff of each model school during their preparation week (before the start of the school term). These standardised Presentations will be prepared and presented by Coalition Members, specifically Dr Diane Brathwaite and Dr Janelle Bryan. The focus of these sessions is to sensitise teachers about the real dangers of the overconsumption of foods/drink high in sugar, salt and fats. An HSFB team member will share on the Model School Programme.

2. PARENT SENSITISATION SESSIONS: One Intervention per school required

The Parent Teachers Association (PTAs) of each model school will carve out time in their various Orientation and First Term meetings for presentations on the dangers of Childhood Obesity and on best practice for prevention including the support for WHO policies at the national level. These standardized presentations will be prepared and presented by Coalition members including Dr Janelle Bryan, Dr Diane Brathwaite, Dr Natasha Sobers, Professor Anne St John and Dr Camille Hope. HSFB Members will present on the Model Schools programme.

3. PARENTS ADVOCACY WHATSAPP GROUP:

Coming out of the PTA meetings, HSFB will initiate a Whatsapp group comprising Parent Champions from each model school (this group can start with a minimum of three parents per school). These parents will be exposed to research, information on COP and will be encouraged to share information on their school; healthy ideas for their schools, etc. The aim is to develop parent advocates who will support the call for strong school policy/legislation both within their internal parent circle of influence and externally with

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policy decision-makers. They will also be required to disseminate information to parents throughout the 2019/2020 school year.

4. STUDENT OUTREACHES: Two Interventions per school required

A critical part of the advocacy and education work will be outreach activities designed for the students. Schools are required to provide the Coalition with two opportunities for the term during which the Coalition team can engage with the students around healthy lifestyles; healthy nutrition practices and the dangers of Childhood Obesity. The format used would be based on previous school engagements conducted by HSFB and would rely heavily on interactive engagement. Presentations will also be conducted by HSFB Champions, Alff Padmore, Stedson RPB Wiltshire, Krystal Boyea, Ashley Lashley and Daniel Alleyne, supported by other Coalition members.

Student Physical Environment

The model schools will also be seeking to address any issues related to marketing to children in the school environment. As such any posters that have been provided by a food and beverage company even if educational will be removed and replaced by one with HSFB's content from its public education campaign. They will be strategically located throughout the school compound and reinforce positive messages about proper nutrition and wellness.

In addition, we will be working with the school administration and canteen vendors to ensure there is access to fruits, vegetables and drinking water. For schools without water coolers we will be partnering with the Muslim Association of Barbados to put in water stands. Currently, most of the schools allow children to drink water during class time so the use of water bottles will be encouraged. The Coalition will also distribute some water bottles at student outreach events.

5. HEALTH/DENTAL CHECKS: One Intervention per School required

The Coalition will provide each school with one lunch-time and/or after school session dedicated to providing health and dental checks to students who pre-register (and provide proof of parent's permission). These sessions will be coordinated by Dr Camille Hope; the Diabetes Association of Barbados and HSFB.

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6. MONITORING AND SUPPORT FOR CANTEEN AND VENDORS:

The Coalition is committed to supporting the canteen owners and vendors associated with the relevant schools as they make the necessary transition required based on the policy ask. The Coalition has already solidified a partnership with the relevant association, of vendors, BARVEN and have worked with them to coordinate two vendors training sessions to date. The Training has focussed on providing the vendors with information and guidance as to how to prepare healthier drinks and meals; how to read labels when purchasing items and why most of the currents drinks and food being sold are schools are harmful to the students.

Coalition Member, Stacia Whittaker, is responsible for the training of the canteen owners and vendors using the national Nutritional and Practical Guidelines for Barbados issued in 2015 by Barbados' National Nutrition Centre, Ministry of Health. The training, which comprised group sessions, will be followed by one-on-one monitoring and support activities coordinated at each Model School. This approach will include both planned and random checks with the vendors as well as consultations as needed. This will be led by Ms Whittaker and facilitated by the selected School Coordinators as well Ms. Kirsten Jones.

The Coalition is currently exploring a partnership with BARVEN (with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture) to identify a team of reliable and registered coconut vendors who will supply coconut water to the model schools on an ongoing basis at a discounted price. Currently, coconut water is not sold at any of the model schools.

7. IMPLEMENTATION OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS CLUBS:

The Health and Wellness Clubs are envisioned as a sustainable extra-curricular activity developed and fashioned by each individual Model School. While the operations of the Clubs will be specific to each school, three of the following four pillars must form part of the template:

- Exercise - mandatory
- School Gardens – optional
- Advocacy Training/Activities - mandatory
- Artistic Performance Activities – mandatory

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While the Coalition will be involved in the development and start up of the Clubs, each model school is required to identify a teacher and parent to “own” and coordinate the Clubs on an ongoing basis.

The Coalition’s Youth Sub-Committee will take responsibility for the Clubs in its genesis. With regards to the Drama/Flash Mob component, this will be coordinated by Amanda Cumberbatch of the National Cultural Foundation. Amanda will work with the students to develop a performance routine in the first term that will form part of the Model Schools’ Advocacy programme.

8. COMPETITIONS:

The Coalition will coordinate and manage three competitions as the promotional drivers during the startup of this Project. The proposed competitions in which each school will be asked to participate include

- MANUP Challenge: a weight loss challenge run by Alff Padmore, targetted at Students and Parents (maybe even teachers)
- Water Bottle Bling: a social media competition which engages students in “dressing up” their water bottles. The entries will be posted on social media and judged by their peers.
- Inter-School Health and Wellness Display Competition: to be designed and produced by the members of the six Health and Wellness Clubs and displayed on a designated Wall in the school. The Displays will be judged towards the end of the September term.

Coalition Members Lisa Bayley, Chanelle Branche and Sheena Warner Edwards are the proposed coordinators for this activity.

9. EVALUATION/MONITORING PROCESS

This is a critical piece of the Project. Each school will be included in an evidence-based evaluation process across the various pillars of the Project. This research will be conducted by HSFB’s partner research team of CAIHR and CDRC. Support for the process will be coordinated by the four School Coordinators.

The proposed areas of evaluation will be further developed to focus mainly on the measurement of compliance; increased positive awareness/attitudes around healthy lifestyles and support for national policy around healthier school environments.

PROGRAMME ROLL OUT – TERM ONE – September – December 2019

ACTION	TIMELINE	Status
Coordinators confirmed	By August 15	Completed
Principal Meetings	July 26 – Aug 23	Ongoing
Teachers Sensitisation	Sept 2 – 6	
Schools Dressed (with MS banners)	Sept 9	
Ban/Restriction Implemented	October 1 for ban on carbonated beverages (January term – restriction for all other)	
Parents Sensitisation at PTA Meetings	Sept 10 – Sept 28	
Student Outreaches	Sept 10 – Sept 28	
Mass Media Campaign Launched at one of the model schools	October 2	
Health Check Day (including dental checks)	October 3 - 15	
Healthy Clubs Mobilised	October 3 - 15	
Vendor Monitoring starts	October 1	
Competitions Starts	October 2	
Flash Mobs (1 project)	October 15 – Nov 15	
Inter-Model School/Stakeholder Activity	Nov 20 (World Children's Day)	
Ist Phase of Evaluation Process	Dec 1 – Dec 15	

PROGRAMME FLOW

